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**SUPPORTER'S PROOF OF EVIDENCE**  
**ON BEHALF OF RAILFUTURE THAMES VALLEY BRANCH**

**TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992: APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED**  
**NETWORK RAIL (EAST WEST RAIL BICESTER TO BEDFORD**  
**IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Railfuture is the leading national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users in order to support economic growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. In the Thames Valley we have several hundred members including the affiliation of most local Rail User Groups. We are independent of the industry and trades unions.
  
- 1.2 I hold an MA from Cambridge University in Mechanical Sciences, am a Chartered Engineer and Member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Following engineering employment in the chemical and paint industries for some thirty years, I became a consultant service to the paint and cleaning products industries on transport matters, before retiring in 2013. In the 1970s I represented my local community in negotiations with Greater Manchester Transport and British Railways about local rail and bus services. In the 1990s I was Chairman of Environmental Services at Wokingham District Council responsible for transport and represented the authority on the South East Region Planning body (SERPLAN). Later I represented environmental organisations on the steering group of the Thames Valley Multi-Modal Study, at the Inquiry into the South East Regional Transport Strategy and as a

member of the SE Regional Transport Board. I presented supporting evidence on behalf of Railfuture at the TWA Inquiry in 2010 into the Chiltern Railways (Bicester to Oxford Improvements) Order.

## **2 RAILFUTURE'S POSITION IN RELATION TO THE SCHEME**

2.1 We fully support the scheme for the reasons set out in DfT document "The Case for East West Rail, Western Section Phase 2" – December 2018, but with the caveats set out in 5 below.

### 2.2 Rail user benefits (local)

2.2.1 The scheme will offer a range and frequency of services between the key economic growth centres of Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford. The Government have asked local authorities along the corridor to achieve 1,000,000 new homes by 2050 and have struck a deal with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver 100,000 by 2031. The intermediate stations will enable easy access for residents, many living in this new housing, to employment in these growth centres. It is vital that the railway is fully opened by the time these residents make their choice of employment and its location and do not have to restrict themselves to the use of the private car. This also applies to self-employed professionals providing consultancy and design services to businesses along the corridor.

### 2.3 Rail user benefits (regional)

2.3.1 This proposed phase of East-West Rail will provide significant opportunities for connections with and service extensions on to other rail routes. Examples include through journeys to the south and west via Oxford to Reading, Swindon and Bristol, providing connectivity with even more of the UK's economic growth areas. There is further potential for through services to Heathrow Airport and via the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and the Midland Main Line (MML).

2.3.2 The proposal will lay vital foundations for the further extension of EWR to the growth area around Cambridge and creating further links to the East Coast Main Line, East

Anglia and east coast ports.

## 2.4 Rail user benefits (national)

2.4.1 There are significant and growing freight movements, particularly inter-modal container traffic and motor cars, along the line through Oxford. These services are constrained by capacity on the lines to the north, particularly the single line section between Leamington Spa and Coventry. If there are any perturbations along this route, freight trains from Southampton Docks, for example, have to be diverted via routes across London, leading to significant delays and additional costs.

2.4.2 EWR will provide an ideal diversion route on to the WCML and MML and, once capacity on the line north of Oxford is fully utilised at all times of the day, a route for a share of this freight traffic. HS2 will also release capacity on the WCML for use by freight trains, giving further justification for EWR being used as a connection for north-south freight traffic.

2.4.3 EWR will also provide a diversion route for passenger trains (e.g. Cross-Country services) during engineering work. The benefits of a diversionary route have been demonstrated during the recent and on-going electrification and upgrading works on the GWML where trains between Didcot and Paddington have been able to be diverted via the newly opened Chiltern line via Oxford Parkway. Bus substitution is increasingly seen by rail passengers as unacceptable whilst such important work is carried out.

## 2.5 Environment

2.5.1 The scheme will enable rail to be the mode of choice along the corridor, leading to reduced emissions and noise from and numbers of accidents on sub-standard main roads.

## 2.6 Social integration

2.6.1 The proposed route will connect areas of significant wealth (e.g. central Oxford), areas of mixed fortune (e.g. Kidlington and Bicester) and more rural areas currently

with less easy access to high value jobs. Bicester is an area currently undergoing major growth in housing and additional housing growth is set to follow along the line to the east.

- 2.6.2 The ‘connectivity’ between these diverse locations will be a major contributor to equalising employment opportunities and improving the chances of local businesses finding the employees they need to continue growth.

### **3 CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Every December Railfuture takes part in a public event in Oxford Town Hall, displaying the opportunities for railway development across our sub-region. Without fail, every year we are asked questions about progress with the development of East West Rail and strong support is expressed for the scheme, it being seen as a transport priority because of the improved access it will create.

### **4 BUS SERVICES**

- 4.1 Currently the only public transport along the corridor is the X5 bus service, connecting Oxford with Cambridge via Bicester, Buckingham and Milton Keynes. Typical journey times are Bedford-Oxford 2½ hours and Milton-Keynes to Oxford 1½ hours. EWR will reduce these to 61 minutes and 41 minutes respectively. (See SUPP/327/3).

### **5 FUTURE PROOFING**

- 5.1 Recent railway re-openings have demonstrated growth far in excess of predictions. We are therefore concerned about paragraphs 6.2.7 to 6.2.10 of Network Rail’s Statement of Case.
- 5.2 Growth on the Borders Railway opened in 2015 is being achieved even before some of the associated housing developments have been completed. There was continued growth of 10% between 2016/17 and 2017/18. However, further growth is being inhibited by irreparable infrastructure limitations built in by budget reductions, such

as single track overbridges and reduced lengths of double track.

- 5.3 The traffic growth on the new Chiltern Railways link via Oxford Parkway to Marylebone has been phenomenal. This route is delivering a quarter of Chiltern Railways' total revenue (see SUPP/327/2).
- 5.4 Similar growth must apply to this Phase 2 because of the planned population expansion.
- 5.5 This Scheme must be designed to meet capacity, including an allowance for this growth, not down to cost. For example, it must be wrong to base the infrastructure between Aylesbury and Claydon around a 1/hour service when it connects major residential areas around Aylesbury Vale Parkway with major employment in Milton Keynes. A minimum of 2/hour should be the specification.
- 5.6 For reasons set out in 2.4.1/2, freight traffic is likely to exceed predictions, and the deletion of the Newton Longville freight loops will surely be regretted.
- 5.7 Across the south-east platforms are being lengthened because of overcrowding, leading to much disruption. Chiltern Railways have to run loco-hauled trains with more coaches at peak times. It must be a mistake to restrict platform lengths at the new EWR stations.
- 5.8 Forecasting seems almost invariably to include an element of 'pessimism bias'. We urge that, as a minimum, passive provision (deliverable without the need for 'blockades') is made in the Order for:
- longer station platforms for increased seating capacity
  - freight loops
  - increased frequency of services for freight and passengers
  - double tracking of MCJ line
  - higher line-speeds to achieve even more attractive journey-times
  - future electrification for wider network benefits, operational efficiencies and associated economic and environmental benefits.

5.9 Too often we have witnessed the scale of economic growth unleashed by rail schemes leading to congestion and crowding and then the need for subsequent expensive disruptive upgrades, if those schemes have been built initially to a too-limited specification. Growing communities with a growing economy need a growing railway to support their aspirations for increasing opportunity and raising prosperity. This project must be future-proofed along its full length.

## **6 DOCUMENTS**

6.1 The following reference documents will be available for reference at the enquiry:

SUPP/327/2 Article outlining growth of traffic on Chiltern Railways  
'Modern Railways' October 2018 pages 54 and 55

SUPP/327/3 Stagecoach X5 bus timetable

SUPP/327/4&5 Correspondence between Kit Malthouse MP Minister of State  
for Housing and English Economic Heartland

Nigel Rose